



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Peter Goldmark - Commissioner of Public Lands

Proposed Smith and Minor Islands Aquatic Reserve Planning Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Prepared By: Michael Grilliot

Dec. 15, 2009

Conference Room, Whidbey Island Conservation District, Coupeville, WA

PARTICIPANTS: Aaron Terada (State Parks), Betty Bookheim (Department of Natural Resources), Dave Peeler (People For Puget Sound), Dick Toft (Island County Marine Resources Committee), Jennifer Meyer (NAS Whidbey Island), Ken Urstad (Puget Sound Anglers), Kevin Ryan (USFWS), Kyle Murphy (Facilitator - Department of Natural Resources), Matt Kukuk (Island County Public Health), Michael Grilliot (Department of Natural Resources), Morgan Schneider (Puget Sound Partnership), Sara Woehrman (WSU Island County Beach Watchers), Steve Ellis (Whidbey Audubon Society)

INTRODUCTIONS:

Introductions of Planning Advisory Committee members began at 12:31pm

RESERVES PROGRAM:

The meeting began by DNR briefing the committee members on DNR and the Aquatic Reserves Program:

A few general questions were raised about the reserves program and the designation process.

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

The committee work plan and committee member roles and responsibilities were then outlined and opened for discussion:

The issue was raised as to how decisions will be made. It was made clear that the committee serves in an advisory capacity and will hopefully reach consensus, however final decision authority remains with the Commissioner of Public Lands.

Minor changes were made to the roles and responsibilities document including DNR's outreach responsibilities.

SCOPE AND CONTENT OF PLAN:

The official boundaries of the proposed reserve were then discussed.

One issue was concerned with the continuity between the State Parks land management plans and the Reserve management plans. It will be necessary to work with the State Parks to

ensure the management plans complement one another. It may be necessary to involve Fort Casey State Park in the discussion if the boundary is moved further south.

There was also conversation about tidelands and “ownership” seaward of the Parks. We will work on determining this and secondly, we will look into the specifics on the “Lease Agreements” (points on map) with Fort Ebey State Park.

Discussion of whether the boundaries should be modified slightly to make it easier for boaters and anglers to recognize when they are in the aquatic reserve took place. Questions arose as to whether boaters and anglers needed to know if they were within the boundaries as these activities would not be affected by the reserve. This discussion will continue upon further investigation of possible existing boundary identifiers.

It was identified that significant Rhinoceros Auklet activity was observed farther south than the current proposed reserve boundary, another possible reason why the proposed reserve boundary could be changed. It was noted that they spread out and feed between Protection Island and this area, the highest densities being within the boundary.

Questions also arose as to why a 200 ft bathymetry contour was used as a large portion of the proposed reserve boundary.

After a short break, the committee created a list of issues and uses to consider during the development of the management plan.

The list is as follows in alphabetical order:

- Aquaculture
- Climate Change/Global Warming
 - + Storm Events
- Critical Species Protection
- Current/Future Leases
- Derelict Gear/Creosote Pilings Removal
- Education Opportunities
- Energy Development
 - + Offshore
- Erosion and Sediment Transport
- Forage Fish Surveys
- Future Outfalls/Intakes
- Historic Cultural Resources
- Land Use Planning
 - + Island County SMP update (specifically concerned with agency/program connectivity)
- Naval Activities
- Oil Spill Planning and Mitigation
- Partnership Involvement Process
 - + Interagency Coordination
- Public Use

- Research (Existing and Future)
 - + Monitoring and Adaptive Management
 - + Connectivity to other efforts
- Restoration
 - + Swan Lake
 - + Swantown (West Beach) failed bulkheads
- Stormwater Runoff
- Tribal Use
- Wildstock Geoduck Harvest (ask Celia Barton)

CONSERVATION TARGETS:

Conservation Targets outlined by the site proponent (People For Puget Sound) and the Technical Advisory Committee were compared and discussed.

Several target species/habitat/conditions were added to the Technical Advisory Committee's recommendations with the final list appearing below:

Aquatic Vegetation and Habitat

- Nereocystis kelp (Bull Kelp): Largest bed in Puget Sound
- Pristine benthic habitats support abundant and diverse submerged aquatic vegetation
- Kelp and macroalgae beds and shallow sandy shelf support fish, bird, and mammalian species forage and rearing areas
- Nereocystis Kelp (bull kelp)
- Zostera marina (eelgrass)
- Phyllospadix serrulatus (toothed surfgrass)

Fish and Crustacean Populations

- High diversity and abundance of benthic (bottom) fish
- Area used extensively by juvenile salmonids from spawning rivers outside the region.
- Salmon (Juvenile)
- Surf smelt
- Sand lance
- Herring

Bird Populations

- Pigeon Guillemots, Tufted Puffins and Rhinoceros Auklets are supported by strong benthic and pelagic habitats
- Harlequin Ducks, sea ducks and Marbled Murrelets are supported over the winter
- Marbled Murrelets
- Rhinoceros auklets
- Surf scoters
- Western Grebes

- Harlequin duck
- Pigeon Guillemots
- Tufted Puffins
- Shorebirds including (but not limited to) Whimbrels, Godwits, Black Oystercatchers, and Phalaropes.

Mammal Populations

- Islands are important seal pupping and haul out site due to the lack of predators and human disturbance.
- Areas around islands are important feeding grounds for Southern Resident J, K and L Orca Pods.
- Elephant Seal (First documented pupping area for Elephant seal in inner WA waters)
- Stellar Sea Lion
- Southern Resident Orcas
- Gray Whales
- Dall's porpoise
- Minke whales

Geomorphology and Oceanography

- Feeder bluffs and nearshore drift cells support spawning marine fish and vegetation.
- Identified as a priority area for protection by numerous conservation planning efforts
- Important oceanographic conditions created by confluence of three water bodies (Admiralty Inlet, Georgia Strait, Strait of Juan de Fuca)

Other Technical Advisory Committee Recommendations Discussed

- Support USFWS management of 200 yard buffer around Smith&Minor Islands
- Restrict all activities that disrupt/destroy oceanographic or geomorphic conditions
- Restrict all activities that disrupt/destroy breeding and foraging habitat

OTHER BUSINESS:

It was brought to the attention of the committee that Fort Ebey State Park is used extensively as a seaweed harvest location. Further study should be conducted to determine if the harvesting techniques and quantities are sustainable.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no members of the public present and no public comment recorded.

CLOSING:

The meeting was concluded at 3:11pm